

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

April 23, 2007

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Doug Sweet (Acting Chair), Jane Brown, Herb Cole, Linda Hiller, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky, Girard Plante, Janna Zwerner
REGRETS: Rob Caruso, Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, Jason Rosenberg,
STAFF: Beverly Droz, Lowell Haynes
GUESTS: Heather Platt (Carroll Center for the Blind),
Cindy Stone (Director and presenter for Newton History Museum)
Paul Eldrenkamp (former Board President of the Newton Historical Society)
Amy Yuhasz (Program Manager for Community Development)

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm and was chaired by Douglas Sweet, Acting Chairperson. The agenda was reviewed and introductions were made around the table. Guests are expected at 7pm.

Minutes of 3/19/07 were accepted .

OLD BUSINESS:

Snow Meeting:

Doug noted Bev had circulated minutes to committee members from the 3/30/07 snow meeting with the Dept. of Public Works. We'll keep reminding them of problems as they arise. Barbara said Newton Highlands and Newton Centre were poorly plowed. Doug said the Committee will meet with Dept. of Public Works again.

Café St. Petersburg (53-57 Union Street):

On 4/12/07 the Access Board issued a ruling that the Café must have a fully accessible route from the alley to the patio by September. Jason is in touch with the restaurant. It is unfortunate that the landlord is unwilling to bear part of the cost. The café may be forced out of business.

Citizen's Bank on Centre St. – the item was tabled

Golden Star Restaurant in Newtonville:

Rosemary said the owner of Shing Yee's in West Newton is taking over the Golden Star. The owner said they're doing major renovations to the Golden Star. She can't get into the Shing Yee restaurant, as the electronic doors have been broken for years so she is concerned about Golden Star. All we can do is notify Inspectional Services.

Fair Housing Task Force:

Bev reported on the May 1 event: "Learn about Newton's Efforts to Promote Fair Housing". The event will present an annual report card of fair housing accomplishments and the results of the disability discrimination audit. There will be 4 workshops: Discriminatory Language; Protected by Fair Housing Laws: Families and Section 8 Voucher Holders; Lead Paint - What's the Law; and Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities.

MCPD is listed as a sponsor of the event. There was a discussion that none of us knows who will speak or represent the MCPD. Janna will be the facilitator for the workshop about "Accommodations for People with Disabilities".

Presentation about Durant-Kenrick House:

At 7:00pm we welcomed Cindy Stone, Director of the Newton History Museum, and Paul Eldrenkamp, former Board President of the Newton Historical Society. Cindy presented information about the Durant-Kenrick House. Built in 1732, this Georgian House is at 286 Waverly Avenue in Newton. The owners are donating the house and the adjacent lot, with a small escrow account of \$300,000. Cindy and Paul are here presenting for the Committee's information and input since it will be property open to the public.

Cindy gave a history of the house. Elementary school children are studying the history of the original owners, the Durants. After the Civil War, the Kenrick family bought it. This family owned a large commercial tree business and bought many fruit trees to the area. The copper beech tree, they planted is adjacent to the lot. Professor Dewing took the house over in the 1920's. Cindy presented and described some photos of the interior including a colonial style oven and a fireplace with a spit.

The History Museum is meeting with the Alderman to apply for CPA funds of \$2.7 million. Cindy and Paul described the 1st floor plan. An old addition at the back of the house is an "L" which is about 100 years old but in very poor structural shape. They'll build workshop classrooms there.

There's a LULA (Limited Use, Limited Access) which will provide access to allow people to get to the 2nd floor. On the second floor a lift is being built into the closet. There will be no steps on the "L" side so a wheelchair user can access the LULA and therefore access both the 1st and 2nd floors.

There will be an audio tour and large type print. Stairs will have a wall on one side and a rail on the other. Cindy added that right now there are no programs for the house but they'd like to have create some programs and make use of the garden as well.

This house is an official historic landmark. No one has lived in the house for about 50 years. A housekeeper has living in the "L" part of the house. Rosemary suggested that she'd like the lift be self operated. In response to Doug's question if it will be a museum, Cindy said it will be a historic house but could have small exhibits and some programs. Heather asked if there would be things that visually impaired people can touch. There will be a handicap accessible bathroom.

Paul said they don't have the door widths that they'd like in the house due to the age. They would like to preserve the historic nature of the building but they're asking MCPD for feedback. There was a discussion about possibilities and pathways for a wheelchair. If a room is for the public, it needs to be accessible for people with disabilities. Since the house is a historic landmark, the CPC doesn't want to have changes made to the doorways, as Cindy understands it. Most of the doors are 30" wide and access is considered 32". There are historical stencils on some of the floors which they'd like to cordon off so that the stencils are not walked on.

Cindy stated that they are right at the beginning of the process. They have to go before many organizations And this is probably a 5 year time line. Many such houses don't have access to a 2nd floor. The Historic Museum is excited about renovating the "L" section of the house but may have to work out access to rooms.

Girard suggested that Cindy visit the Longfellow House in Cambridge. Jason suggested a "U" pathway so if people enter and go through the rooms, they can turn around and retrace their steps out, if that's what is needed. Paul said the architects for the house renovation are well versed with understanding access issues and suggested that the architects present before our Committee.

Doug appreciated Cindy and Paul for presenting to the MCPD and said we'd like to help with them.

OLD BUSINESS:

At 7:55pm we welcomed Lowell and his boss Amy Yuhasz, Program Manager for Community Development, from their previous meeting. Lowell provided an update on some other old business items.

Crossing at Hammond Pond Parkway:

We have not heard anything back from Lana. Lowell reported he'd heard there would be a bus stop at Imperial Towers near Capital Grille. Doug asked Lowell to try to find out from David Kosses about the change which is Bus Route 60. Lowell wrote a letter for the wheelchair curb cuts to Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation. They're meeting with the Dept of Public Works in 2 weeks to discuss curb cuts.

Brigham Community House:

Lowell talked with Russ Feldman and the ballpark figure, not including the door opener, is \$2,500 for hardware and installation. Lowell read the list of items that was presented previously to the Committee:

- Automatic Hand Dryer (motion not button)
- Automatic Hand Soap Dispenser
- Automatic sensor light switch
- Wall mounted sink with auto water faucet
- Toilet, commercial, ADA elongated seat, 17" high
- Toilet Battery powered Flushometer (auto flush)

The renovations are covered by CPA monies except the items listed above, which are automated. Some members feel these items are not needed. There was further discussion about the items and what members liked and didn't like and whether we should agree to part of it. Bev mentioned that at the last meeting Jason had said it was too bad that some of these types of items are not part of standard code for bathrooms. Barb brought up that she doesn't believe that the computers at the Brigham House are accessible for the visually impaired. Lowell said that is a different item.

The bathroom will be accessible under CPA funding but these items would make it nicer. Girard made a motion to provide the funding needed for the bathroom. No one seconded the motion. The motion died. The Committee took no further action.

CDBG ACCESS PROJECTS REPORT for April by Lowell

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for their review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Any discussion that took place at the meeting, other than Lowell's reading of the report, is noted below each appropriate bullet item and will start with the words "It was noted".

. Current Projects:

○ Police Headquarters Annex Access Ramp (Project CD0203A. Expended, \$245,218; Budget balance, \$7,631; Building Dept. budget, \$66,600) – The concrete ramp surface was recently torn up and re-poured. The slope issues have been resolved as much as possible. The slope is not perfect, but close. The contractor still needs to make some minor adjustments to the handrails. We are hoping the project will be completed by the end of April. Can we actually be near the end? (*EDC: April 2007*)

It was noted that we've made substantial progress in re-pouring the concrete and it's so close to being perfect except for one small area. If the architect had made the ramp 3 feet longer, it would have fit the slope perfectly. The handrails are being adjusted.

○ Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Projects CD0203B and CD0703C. Expended, \$25,015; Budget balance: \$14,386) – We have ordered the installation of APS-10 audible pedestrian signals at the intersection of Walnut and Cabot Streets. We are communicating with the Traffic Engineer to improve the pedestrian crossing at Centre Street @ Centre Ave. in Newton Corner. *The City's signal company says the*

existing equipment is aging and cannot be corrected. Therefore, our tentative plan is to order two sets of regular APS-10 pedestrian signals. (EDC: fall 2007).

It was noted that we'll have further discussion about this issue in the budget discussion to follow.

○ Wellington Park Access (Project CD0303C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$10,000) – *No change since last report.* Our project is an asphalt walkway to provide an accessible route from the park entrance to some benches and to the basketball and tennis courts. DPW will do the work. The work has been delayed because of disagreement among residents regarding the location of additional walkways through the park that are to be funded by the City's CPA budget. The project will be completed in the spring. (EDC: spring 2007)

It was noted that Lowell believes there is an agreement as to where the paths will be placed.

○ Ware's Cove Accessible Connector Path (Project CD0403A. Expended, \$8,562; Budget balance, \$10,178) – *No change since last report.* Construction is almost completed on the accessible path that begins at the field house, passes east of the children's play area, and connects with the accessible path that begins north of the playground and runs to the pump house on the way to Purgatory Cove. A few locations in the path need minor improvements and these will be made in the spring. (EDC: May 2007)

○ Benches (Project CD0403C. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$3,000) – *No change since last report.* The current budget will be limited to installation of benches at Wellington Park when our construction of walkways in the park is completed. (EDC: summer 2007)

○ Curb Cuts (Project CD0703D. Expended, \$37,482; Budget balance: \$106,747) – *No change since last report.* The Dept. of Public Works has ended its curb cut work for the summer on the designated sites between Parker Street and Newton South High School. In the spring, they will begin work on the next phase of this project, which includes 54 new curb cut locations. The largest block of new locations are on Woodland Road from Hancock Street to Windermere Road. *We are still expanding our list of curb cuts to be done in 2007.* Mayor's Committee members are still encouraged to report priority locations for needed curb cuts. (Expected Date of Completion: None. On-going work.)

It was noted that DPW expects to hire some workers to help with the curb cuts. Rosemary brought up concerns with the curb cuts in Newton Centre at the Green. Lowell said there would be a drop off curb cut at the Citizen's Bank where there is an accessible parking space. There was discussion as to whether a mid-block cross walk and another curb cut on the other side was needed. Barb noted the curb cut at Langley and Centre Street pools water. Lowell will check on it. Doug asked about the ceasing of curb cuts in the vicinity of NSHS. Lowell will check back into it. There are 54 new curb cut locations. There are still determining the situation in Auburndale at Woodland Street where the student was killed. Lowell has made suggestions and said they may decide to do new sidewalks in which case the curb cuts would happen at the same time. Lowell will find out their plans. There are still another 35 curb cuts to deal with.

○ School Administration Building Access Improvements (Project CD0603A.) – This project is now complete. The stairs leading from Walnut Street have a new set of railings.

It was noted that two weeks ago when Janna and Linda went there, the outside door was not working. Lowell will contact Mike Cronin.

○ Public Facilities and Parks Access (Project CD0703A. Expended, \$0; Budget balance, \$67,293) – *No change since last report.* The work on the construction of the accessible walkway from the Mason-Rice School parking lot to the planned accessible play area within the Newton Centre Playground should begin in the next month. The project will be managed by the Department of Parks and Recreation and carried out by the Department of Public Works. The second part of this project is the re-construction of two sets of stairs in Burr Park by the Department of Public Works and the installation of railings on all three sets of stairs in the park. The work will be done this summer. (EDC: October 2007)

Lowell had emailed the following budget reminder with his CDBG report:

CURRENT CDBG ACCESS BUDGET ISSUES:

The Mayor's Committee needs to make decisions regarding uncommitted CDBG Access funds. For FY07, \$92,482 of that budget has been committed, although \$34,343 remains uncommitted. Of the uncommitted funds, \$25,843 are to be spent from the Public Facilities and Parks project and the remaining \$8,500 is in a 'to be determined' account. For FY08, all of the \$127,000 remains uncommitted, although we have traditionally set aside \$50,000 to \$75,000 for the construction of curb cuts. I request that we spend time at the April 23 and May 21 meetings to discuss the priorities for spending CDBG access funds.

Budget Discussion:

Lowell noted that there are 2 areas that we have to review: APS (Audible Pedestrian Signals) and Public Facilities and Parks Projects. We have \$14,000 left.

Audible Pedestrian Signals:

There was discussion of what kind of signals to have. Doug is opposed to the Polara system. Walnut and Cabot Streets would cost: \$14,000 without installation, \$18,000 with installation. Centre Street and Centre Avenue: independent of us, the City (Clint) is of the opinion that they should have separate signals for pedestrian crossings of the two streets (Centre St. and Centre Ave.) Lowell recommended to the City that we straighten the crosswalk and construct a cut-through at the island for more accessible passage and he's waiting for an answer.

Commonwealth Avenue and Washington Street: the initial estimate was \$6,600 due to the complexity of the intersection. There is also the issue of the lack of curb cuts through the median.

Beacon and Chestnut Streets.

A motion to have a Polara signal at Commonwealth Avenue and Washington Streets passed.

Of our FY07 uncommitted funds, there's the \$8500 unallocated.

Lowell also brought up the following:

- Adams at Washington Street in Nonantum. Polara navigator is recommended by the Nonantum Neighborhood group. Doug said Danielle Bailey can present to us why this is needed.
- Watertown and Chapel Streets: Lowell thought an APS-10 would do.
- West Newton Square: Waltham/Watertown/Washington Streets. We had no input on these signals, and there is no beaoning, just a sound. It is the same problem at Grove Street.
- The Walnut and Beacon Streets intersection is still waiting.
- Work at most locations is postponed to July when the new Fiscal year budget begins.

Girard also mentioned an APS problem in Auburndale at the Turtle Lane playhouse.

Lowell reviewed the budget paragraph above that was emailed with his CDBG report. For FY08 there is \$127,000 that still remains uncommitted.

A Motion to set aside \$50,000 for construction of curb cuts was passed.

NEW BUISNESS:

- Jane brought attention to the editorial "Blind Siding" that was in the Sunday Boston Globe. Doug will get the link so that it can be sent to the group.
- It was noted that Lowell is planning to retire in November. He will be sorely missed!

Motion to adjourn at 9:10 pm. The next meeting will be May 21 at 6:30pm in the cafeteria.